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Bangladesh

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I. Introduction and methodology

Introduction

1. Bangladesh has made remarkable progress in the field of human rights since the current democratic government under the leadership of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina assumed office in 2009. The efforts and achievements of the government during 2009–2013 towards ensuring human rights for all have been reflected in its 2nd Cycle of Universal Periodic Review (UPR).

2. Bangladesh considers all human rights as universal, indivisible, interrelated, interdependent and mutually reinforcing. Guided by its constitutional pledge to realize *"a society in which the rule of law, fundamental human rights and freedom, equality and justice, political, economic and social, will be secured for all citizens,* Bangladesh has been adopting progressive policies that promote and protect human rights for all. In the recent times, the Government of Bangladesh (the GoB) has continued to invest in strengthening democratic institutions and accountability mechanisms, ensuring rights and safety of workers including overseas and domestic workers, promoting freedom of speech, expression and media, and enhancing access to mass media by bringing information technology to the people's doorsteps. The national development agenda has been aligned with international commitments focusing on equity and inclusiveness. Gender equality and protection of women and children from violence continues to take priority in the policy initiatives. In the international fora Bangladesh has continued to flag human rights and justice as core components of all global discourses concerning the existing and emerging global challenges like violent extremism, climate change and mass movement of people.[1]

3. The realization of Bangladesh's human rights commitments faced setbacks in the face of sudden influx of nearly one million forcibly displaced Myanmar nationals (Rohingyas) to Bangladesh. Out of humanitarian consideration, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and the people of Bangladesh stood beside the displaced Rohingyas and opened their homes and hearts and shared the resources allocated for them with the Rohingyas. Professor Yanghee Lee, the Special Rapporteur on the Situation in Myanmar has recently recognized, *"The people of Bangladesh - they have shown the world the definition of humanity as they continue, despite their own hardships to host the Rohingya people."*

4. Despite this unfortunate setback as well as other challenges posed by emerging global threats, Bangladesh remained committed to the obligations of putting its best efforts in implementing the recommendations accepted in the 2nd Cycle of UPR. Although there are areas that remain inadequately addressed, Bangladesh responsibly acknowledges the gaps and renews its commitment to continue its efforts in collaboration with its international partners towards making stronger and bigger strides in upholding human rights and humanitarian principles.

Methodology

5. This report contains information on the status of implementation of the recommendations accepted during the 2nd Cycle of Bangladesh's UPR in 2013 as well as the best practices with regard to overall promotion and protection of human rights during 2013–2017. Before preparing this report, an orientation programme was organized in partnership with the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights to sensitize the concerned government officials about the reporting procedure. Thereafter, the recommendations were clustered in specific categories and issue-wise questionnaire was prepared. Based on the questionnaire, the concerned government ministries/ departments/ agencies provided information on the implementation of recommendations. The GoB held multiple consultations with the government ministries/ departments/ agencies and civil society organizations [ANNEX-II] in the process of drafting this report. The GoB also participated in the workshops and consultations organized by CSOs on UPR and other alternative treaty-body reportings.

II. International human rights mechanism and Bangladesh[2]

6. The GoB has made every possible effort to implement the 191 recommendations that it accepted during the 2nd Cycle UPR.[3] A mid-term review was held in November 2015 to follow up the progress towards implementation of the recommendations.[4]

7. The GoB in fulfillment of its commitment to cooperate with international human rights mechanism submitted the Initial Reports on the ICCPR and the ICRMW in 2015, and the Initial Reports on the ICESCR[5] and the ICRPD in 2017. In addition, the GoB submitted its 8th Periodic Report on the CEDAW in 2015.[6] Besides, the GoB engaged in interactive dialogues with the Human Rights Committee and the Committee on Migrant Workers in 2017, with the Committee on Elimination of Discrimination Against Women in 2016 and the Committee on Rights of the Child in 2015. Moreover, the GoB hosted the Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion or Belief from August 30 to September 05 of 2015. Bangladesh also facilitated visit of Special Rapporteur on Human Rights Situation in Myanmar twice (in 2017 & 2018). Bangladesh has responded favourably to the requests of meetings from the Special Rapporteur on the Human Rights of Migrants, Working Group on Enforced Disappearance, etc.[7] In August 2017, in response to the invitation of UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, a high-level ministerial delegation held a meeting with the him and discussed the over-all human rights situation in Bangladesh.

8. Since 2013, the GoB has not signed/ratified/acceded to any new international human rights instrument. The GoB believes that prior to becoming a party to any international instrument due consideration should be given to the capacity of national institutions to carry out the treaty obligations.[8] The Law Commission has recommended the GoB to withdraw its reservations to article 2 and article 16/1(c) of the CEDAW in keeping with its Constitution and existing laws. The GoB is considering the Law Commission's recommendation in the light of the socio-political reality of the country.[9]

III. Institutional and normative measures

9. Since the 2nd Cycle of UPR in 2013, the GoB has undertaken various administrative, legislative and policy measures to strengthen its institutional mechanisms as well as to fulfill its commitments to the promotion and protection of human rights.[10]

Institutional measures[11]

The Parliament

10. The 10th parliamentary election was held on 5 January 2014 in accordance with the Constitution. In the 2014 elections, Awami League, the ruling political party won the majority seats of the Parliament and formed government. About 40.04 percent of the voters cast their votes in the election. The present Parliament appointed the first female Speaker in the history of Bangladesh. During 2013–2017, the Parliament has passed 116 new legislations and formed 50 Committees including 39 ministry-specific Parliamentary Standing Committees. During this period, the Parliament in its law-making process addressed, among others, the civil-political, socio-economic and cultural rights of the people, especially women, children, ethnic minorities, workers, socially marginalized people, etc.

The Supreme Court

11. The Supreme Court of Bangladesh (the SC), the apex court of the country, comprises the High Court Division and the Appellate Division. During 2013–2017, the number of justices appointed to the Appellate Division and the High Court Division were respectively 7 and 25. The SC disposed of 49,512 cases in 2016. The SC on multiple occasions interpreted the law in a manner that upholds principles of human rights.

12. The Appellate Division of the SC in *Tayeeb (Md) v. Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh* [2015] 67 DLR (AD) 57 held that any act of extra-judicial

punishment in pursuance of religious edict (fatwa) affecting the rights, reputation or dignity of any person would be punishable according to law. In *the Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh v. Professor Nurul Islam* [2016] 68 DLR (AD) 378, the Appellate Division defined 'right to life' in broader terms and observed that the right to life is not only limited to protection of life but also extends to protection of health, enjoyment of pollution free air and water, maintenance and improvement of public health.

The National Human Rights Commission

13. The GoB is committed to strengthen the National Human Rights Commission of Bangladesh (the NHRCB) as an efficient and independent institution. Over the years, the GoB has increased its allocable portion of fund to the NHRCB by 172 percent. The NHRCB receives its allocated fund directly in its account. The GoB is also considering expansion of manpower of the NHRCB by creating additional 93 posts and making available more resources for logistic support.[12]

The Anti-Corruption Commission

14. In order to make the Anti-Corruption Commission (the ACC-BD) more effective and efficient; the Parliament twice amended the Anti-Corruption Commission Act, 2004 in 2013 and 2016. The ACC-BD has been made an autonomous institution and the tenure of its commissioners has been further extended up to a period of 5 years. The MoPA has approved a new organogram for the ACC-BD comprising 2,290 officers and staff members.

15. The ACC-BD has introduced 'Public Hearing' as an important tool to combat corruption. More than 1200 complaints were heard and steps were taken to address them during such public hearings.[13] In addition, 25 institutional teams have been constituted to take necessary action to prevent corruption in institutions. A Complain Center with a toll-free hotline (106) was installed at the ACC-BD head office in 2017. During 2013–2017, a total of 1,655 corruption cases were filed. A total of 622 public officials were convicted of corruption during this period. Currently 14,016 corruption cases remained pending before the court [ANNEX-III]. The ACC-BD filed and prosecuted 222 money- laundering cases, of which 24 cases ended in convictions.[14] Furthermore, the ACC-BD has so far seized property worth USD 87.00 million and also 116 vehicles. Besides, 1,408 bank accounts worth USD 94.80 million have been frozen at its instruction.

16. The Ombudsman Act has been passed for the purpose of establishing the office of Ombudsman. Appointment to the post of Ombudsman is under active consideration of the GoB.[15]

The Election Commission

17. The Election Commission (the EC) operates through 10 regional offices in addition to 64 District-level Election Offices across the country. A Guideline has been promulgated by the EC in 2013 to facilitate impartial and accurate assessment of election processes by the International Election Observers. During 2013–2017, a number of 11 electoral laws were enacted and updated by the Election Commission with a view to ensuring free, fair and credible elections both at national and local levels [ANNEX-IV]. From 2012 to February 2017, the EC organized 6,937 elections at national and local levels against 4,808 posts [ANNEX-V].

The National Legal Aid Services Organization

18. The Legal Aid Services Act 2000 has been amended in 2013 to institutionalize Legal Aid Officers at the District level, mediation services, fund disbursements monitoring system, forming legal aid committee at the SC and relaxing financial conditions to ensure free legal aid services to larger number of people. From 2013 to July of 2017, the National Legal Aid Services Organization (the NLASO) provided legal services to 138,542 people across the country. 44,314 prisoners received legal assistance from NLASO. NLSAO directly contributed to the disposal of 38, 515 criminal cases, 19,733 civil cases and 59 other types of cases during this period.[16] [ANNEX-VI]

Legislative measures

Legislations

19. Legislative measures for implementation of human rights treaty obligations at national level include adoption of laws relating to rights of the persons with disabilities, protection against torture, child rights etc.[17] The laws enacted during 2013–2017, especially for promotion and protection of human rights are as follows:

- The Protection of the Rights of the Persons with Disabilities Act, 2013
- The National Food Security Act, 2013
- The Overseas Employment and Migrants Act, 2013
- The Maintenance of Parents Act, 2013
- The Torture and Custodial Death (Prevention) Act, 2013
- The Children Act, 2013
- The Bangladesh Water Act, 2013
- The National River Protection Commission Law, 2013
- The Non-Formal Education Act, 2014
- The Formalin Control Act, 2015
- The Child Marriage Restraint Act, 2017
- The Bangladesh Biodiversity Act, 2017
- The Bangladesh Civil Aviation Authority Act, 2017

20. In addition, the laws already in force have been amended in keeping with the GoB's commitment to uphold human rights for all. Amendments to the Birth and Death Registration Act, 2004; the Legal Aid Services Act, 2000; the Anti-Terrorism Act, 2009; the Labour Act, 2006 etc. are the few examples.

Policy measures

21. During 2013-17, the GoB has adopted number of policies to guide the administrative plans and actions, such as:

- The National Occupational Safety and Health Policy, 2013
- The National Broadcasting Policy, 2014
- The National Nutrition Policy, 2015
- The Domestic Workers' Protection and Welfare Policy, 2015
- The National Drug Policy, 2016
- The National Online Mass Media Policy, 2017

IV. Area-specific best practices in human rights

Civil and political rights

Strengthening access to Justice[18]

22. The GoB recognizes independence of judiciary as the key requirement for ensuring access to justice and in that line, it has taken a number of measures to ensure the independence of subordinate judiciary- which include, among others, reforming the recruitments process, expanding the number of courts and judges, organizing capacity building and training programmes etc. Besides, the resource allocation for judiciary has

substantially increased over the years (BDT 1.14 billion in 2014–15, BDT 1.35 in 2015–16 and BDT 1.94 in 2016–17).

23. The GoB has adopted the Judicial Service (Discipline) Rules, 2017 in consultation with the SC. In addition, a total of 2,580 judges, law officers and support staff have been given different types of training. The MoLJPA is planning to train another 1,940 judges, 500 law officers and 2,000 support staff of the subordinate judiciary in the coming years. The MoLJPA has also signed a MoU with the Western Sydney University of Australia to train 540 judges of the subordinate courts. In the last 3 years 12 buildings have been constructed to house Chief Judicial Magistrates (CJM) courts and 28 District Judges courts underwent infrastructural expansion. There is also plan to construct 52 new buildings to house CJM courts and make infrastructural refurbishment to 29 District Judges courts.

24. In partnership with UNDP, the SC has launched the Judicial Strengthening Project (JUST) to improve its capacity to administer the court system and reduce backlog of cases. Since 2013, JUST in partnership with the SC has been operating Case Management Committees in three pilot District Courts of *Dhaka*, *Kishoreganj* and *Rangamati*. This project has resulted in to speedy disposal of cases from 74 to 98 percent.

The International Crimes Tribunal

25. In view of overwhelming public demand and the GoB's own electoral commitment, the International Crimes Tribunal, Bangladesh (ICT-BD) was established in 2010 under the International Crimes (Tribunals) Act, 1973 to try the perpetrators of genocide, crimes against humanity and other international crimes committed during the liberation war in 1971. The Act, which is in consonant with the provisions of the Rome Statute,[19] provides that its judges shall be independent in the exercise of its judicial functions and shall ensure fair trial [s. 6(2A)]. Till date, 29 cases were conclusively disposed of by the ICT-BD. A number of 53 accused persons were convicted and 2 accused persons had died during trial stage. In 2015, the Rules of Procedure for International Crimes Tribunal was amended, to facilitate speedy disposal of cases and transparency of court procedure.[20]

26. The Appellate Division of the SC (in Criminal Review Petition Nos. 17–18 of 2013) held that review petition is maintainable against its own judgment passed in appeal arising from any ICT-BD case and whenever such review or mercy petition is filed or remains pending, the sentence will not be executed until they are disposed of.[21]

Death penalty

27. In Bangladesh, Death penalty remains a valid form of punishment for the most heinous crimes. However, the GoB has been gradually edging out death penalty with other form of punishments like life imprisonment. Of all the laws enacted during 2013–2017, only two – the Bangladesh Coast Guard Act, 2016, and the Civil Aviation Act, 2017 – provide for capital punishment respectively for 'Mutiny' and 'Prejudicing Safe Operation of Aircraft with Intent to Endanger Life'. Besides, there are multiple layers of safeguards against death penalty before it is finally executed. For example, during 2013–2017 the trial courts passed a total of 1,119 death sentences, while the High Court Division confirmed only 130 death sentences and commuted 239 death sentences to lesser punishment. During 2013–2017, death sentences have been carried out against 17 convicts only.[22]

Combating terrorism and drug trafficking[23]

28. Terrorism and violent extremism have become a global challenge. The GoB follows 'zero tolerance' policy towards terrorism and does not allow its territory to be used for terrorist activities against other countries. After the attack in the Holey Artisan Café in Dhaka on 01 July 2016, multiple operations have been conducted by the LEAs against the terrorists all over the country and have successfully foiled several plots of terrorist attacks. The GoB is also running massive awareness campaign involving families, teachers, religious leaders, and students to prevent spread of violent extremism. Recently, the GoB has banned an extremist group named, '*Ansar-Al-Islam*'.

29. With a view to strengthening its fight against narcotics, the GoB has recently reconstituted the National Narcotics Control Board. During 2013–2016, a total of 219,210

cases were filed under the Narcotics Control Act, in which 267, 206 persons were charged with offences connected with illegal trade/consumption of narcotics.

The LEAs and human rights

30. The GoB under the leadership of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina maintains a policy of 'zero tolerance' with regard to criminal liabilities of the members of the LEAs. Any allegation of commission of offence by any LEA member is dealt with as per the applicable laws of the country. The law in general neither accords immunity to the members of the LEAs from criminal prosecution nor makes any discrimination their favour. For example, in *Narayanganj* 7-Murder Cases, the trial court sentenced 26 accused persons including 16 RAB members to death. Another 9 accused RAB members received imprisonment in different terms.[24]

31. The GoB has an unequivocal no-impunity stance as regards involvement of the LEAs in kidnappings or abductions. The police have arrested 267 impostors who used to fake as police personnel. Many persons could have been rescued due to the LEAs' diligent maneuver.[25] Disciplinary measures are taken if any member of the LEAs is found anyhow involved in incidences giving rise to criminal liability. Any person aggrieved by any act or misdemeanour of any member of the LEAs is entitled to have recourse to courts of law. The SC in Writ Petition No. 2833/2017 has recently directed the Inspector General of Police to take necessary action against 03 police officers of *Satkhira* district for their negligence in dealing a missing person incident back in 2016.

32. During 2013-2017, criminal charges have been brought against 258 members of the LEAs and 33 LEA members were convicted in trial.

Freedom of press and the journalists

33. At present 32 television channels including 4 state-owned channels, 22 FM radio and 17 community radio channels are operating in Bangladesh. A number of 2,800 newspapers are currently being published in Bangladesh. The Press Institute of Bangladesh has trained 16,000 newspaper journalists to enhance professional skill. The National Institute of Mass Communications has trained 2,255 journalists working in electronic media. At the same time, the Institute has launched a one-year Postgraduate Diploma Programme in Broadcast Journalism. The GoB has enacted the Bangladesh Journalists Welfare Trust Act, 2014 in order to facilitate financial assistance to the journalists and their families. To fix the minimum remuneration for the journalists the GoB has accorded its approval to form the Ninth Wage Board. With a view to establishing balance between freedom of expression and public morality & interest, the GoB has approved the Digital Security Bill, 2018 repealing the Information and Communication Technology Act, 2006.[26]

34. The GoB believes that safe working environment for journalists is fundamental to freedom of press and impunity for crimes against the media professionals affects this right. Therefore, any incident of use of violence against media professionals to thwart them is addressed with utmost seriousness. The LEAs respond to the incidents of valance and assault against the journalists as diligently as possible. For instance, in the case of the murder of Abdul Hakim Shimul in February of 2017, the Police took immediate actions and arrested 38 accused persons including the sitting Mayor of the concerned Municipality.[27]

Civil society, social media and human rights defenders

35. The GoB is vigilant to protect civil society, bloggers and thus create space for freedom of expression for all walks of life. Till now, 12 cases have been lodged in connection with incidents of attack on the bloggers. Investigation has been completed in 5 cases indicting 26 criminals. The remaining 7 cases are under investigation.[28]

36. Cases were lodged in regard to the reported incidents of assaults on 03 human rights defenders including Ms. Sultana Kamal, one of the most prominent human rights activists of the country with the concerned police stations. The police have submitted indictment report in one case.[29]

Economic, social and cultural rights

A. Sustainable economic and social development

37. The GoB, under the leadership of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, envisions transforming Bangladesh into a middle-income country by 2021 and a developed country by 2041 so that the economic, social and cultural rights of every citizen can be meaningfully realized.[30]

Pro-poor policies

38. The Perspective Plan 2010-2021 and the Five-Year Plans were put in place to actualize the vision 2021. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) were also integrated into its Seventh Five-Year Plan (2016–21) in the light of 'whole-of-society' approach.[31] In 2018, Bangladesh ranked 34th as per the World Economic Forum's Inclusive Development Index - which is two steps up from the previous 36th position.[32]

Poverty reduction

39. Bangladesh achieved 7.28 percent GDP growth in FY 2016–2017, the highest in its history. Meanwhile, per capita income has risen to USD 1,610 from USD 848 in FY 2010–2011. The poverty rate has been reduced to 23.2 percent from 31.5 percent in 2010 and rate of ultra-poor was 12.9 percent in 2016 compared to 17.6 percent in 2010.[33]

Protection of the family and traditional values

40. The GoB recognizes family as the fundamental unit of society. For the women employees, Bangladesh Service Rules provides for 6 months' maternity leave and the Bangladesh Labour Act, 2006 provides for 16 weeks maternity leave. The GoB provides monthly maternity allowance to the underprivileged pregnant women across the country. During FY 2016–2017, an amount of BDT 500 per month was provided to 500,000 such women.[34]

41. In Bangladesh, traditionally the children look after their parents in their old age. In keeping with this societal value, the GoB has enacted the Maintenance of Parents Act, 2013 enjoining the children to maintain their parents when they do not have sufficient means.[35]

B. Social security measures

42. The Constitution recognizes the citizens' right to social security in the cases of 'underserved want arising from unemployment, illness or disablement, as well as suffered by widows or orphans or in old age'. The National Social Security Strategy has been adopted in 2015 to provide social security to destitute persons and women, old persons, persons with disability etc. The major social security programmes include Food for Work Programme, Vulnerable Group Development, Rural Maintenance Programme, Food for Education Programme, Female Secondary School Assistance Programme, Vulnerable Group Feeding, Old Age and Widow Allowance.

43. In the current financial year, the number of recipients for old age allowance has been increased from 3.15 to 3.50 million. Total 1.27 million widow & destitute women and .825 million disabled persons are receiving special allowances. A special grant worth BDT 110 million has been made for the transgender persons.[36]

44. During FY 2017–2018, the total budgetary allocation for the destitute and deserted women was increased to BDT 7590 million. A total of 1,265,000 women has been registered under this programme.

C. Raising standard of living

Access to food, safe drinkingwater and sanitation[37]

45. The GOB is en route to achieving the three dimensions of food security, i.e. availability, access and utilization. Bangladesh now produces over 34 million tons of food

grains each year and it is almost self-sufficient in producing rice. There is a reserve of 1.1 million tons of food grains. The rice purchasing capacity of the citizens improved in 2014 following a decreasing trend in 2013.

Safe drinking water

46. Access to safe drinking water is a basic human right in Bangladesh. The Bangladesh Water Act, 2013 formally acknowledges the right to water and provides for coordinated development, management, exploration, distribution, use, and protection of water resources. Nationwide, population with access to improved drinking water sources is estimated at 87 percent. The Perspective Plan (2010–21) among others attaches a high priority on ensuring access to safe drinking water for all.[38] As per Bangladesh Economic Review, 97.9 percent population has access to safe drinking water. The GoB has set a specific target to ensure safe drinking water for all by 2020.

Housing for the disadvantaged persons

47. Right to shelter is recognized by the Constitution as a basic necessity. The GoB is committed to achieve housing for all by 2021. The National Housing Authority (the NHA) has undertaken 55 projects across the country, particularly for the poor, the low and the middle-income group of people.

48. The GoB has recently launched the first-ever rental-based flat construction project for slum-dwellers in Dhaka. Under this project, some 10,000 residential flats will be constructed for slum dwellers for their rehabilitation. Moreover, the GoB has also approved a project titled 'Construction of Apartments for the Low and Mid-Income People' to construct some 15,036 flats for the low and mid-income people at a cost of BDT. 109.02 billion.[39]

Sanitation coverage

49. The GoB has ensured sanitation coverage to 99 percent of its population while open defecation rate has been reduced to 01 percent from 42 percent in 2003. Total 73.3 percent population has access to improved sanitation compared to 33 percent in 2003. The GoB plans to ensure 100 percent access to sanitary latrines in urban area and 90 percent in rural area by 2020.

Generating employment opportunities[40]

50. According to Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS), 1.4 million new jobs have been created in the country since 2015 with increase of workforce to 62.1 million in 2015–2016 from 60.7 million in 2013. The Labour Force Participation Rate (LFPR) for female was recorded 35.6 percent in 2015–2016, which registers an increase of 2.1 percent 2013. LFPR for male population has increased from 81.7 to 81.9 percent.[41]

51. The GoB adopted Employment Generation Program for the Poorest (EGPP) to provide a secure and regular source of income to over 700,000 people. More than 33 percent of them (230,000) are women.

52. In order to create self-employment opportunities for the unemployed youth, the Employment Bank has been providing credit facility on easy terms. During 2015–2017, the Bank disbursed BDT. 6.45 billion loans to a total of 16,88,529 persons.

D. Disaster management

53. Bangladesh is recognized globally as a forerunner in disaster management. In order to strengthen disaster management system, the Bureau of Disaster Management and Relief has been upgraded to the Ministry of Disaster Management and Relief (the MoDMR). The GoB has adopted National Disaster Management Policy in 2015 that defines the national perspective and lays down the strategic framework of disaster management. The GoB has adopted National Action Plan for Disaster Management 2010-2015 to put in place an efficient emergency response system capable of handling large scale disasters.[42]

54. In view of increasing number of deaths from lightning strikes, the GoB designated lightning strikes as a natural disaster in 2016 [ANNEX-VII]. The MoDMR has taken a project worth BDT 170 million to install lightning strike devices and plantation of one million palm trees across the country. Furthermore, the GoB has decided to incorporate provision for installing grounding system in the Building Code.

E. Access to health care[43]

55. The National Health Policy, 2011 envisages primary health care and emergency health facilities for all on equitable basis. During FY 2017–2018, the GoB allocated BDT 206.52 billion (USD 2581.58 million) in health, nutrition and population sector. In 2016, the GoB prepared a draft law named, 'the Patient and the Health Care Service Provider (Protection) Bill, 2016' setting out the rights and obligations of the patients and the stakeholders engaged in health care sector.

56. In the non-urban localities, 18,500 community clinics have been established to provide affordable health care that covers about 8,000 people per clinic. The GoB has also established 4,461 Union Health and Family Welfare Centres, 424 Upazila Health Complexes, 60 Sadar Upazila Health Offices, 5 Thirty-one-bed hospitals and 2 Thirty-bed hospitals. Per day about 200 patients receive health services from each Upazila Health Complex. The GoB has established 64 hospitals at district levels, each of which deals with 600 patients daily. Moreover, 34 tertiary hospitals have been established in different parts of the country, including medical college hospitals, which serve on an average 1,700 patients each day.

Reduction of child mortality

57. Bangladesh has attained the target of MDG-4 in reduction of child mortality rate. There has been 71 percent reduction against the target of 66 percent by 2015. The current infant mortality rate is 29 per 1,000 live births, and the neonatal mortality rate is 24 per 1,000 live births. Bangladesh has also pledged to prevent an additional 108,000 deaths annually to reduce the national under-5 child mortality rate to 20 per 1,000 live births by 2035.[44]

Reduction of maternal mortality

58. In order to reduce maternal mortality, the GoB has adopted a National Strategy for Maternal Health. The current Maternal Mortality Rate (MMR) in Bangladesh is 170 per 100,000 live births. Maternal mortality has dropped by 70 percent against the 2015 target of 75 percent (143 per 100,000 live births).[45]

59. The Directorate General of Health Services is implementing Community Based Skilled Birth Attendants (CSBA) training programmes in every district. About 6,100 Health Workers, Family Welfare Assistants and Female Health Assistants have been trained as CSBAs to provide home based maternal health services.[46] The GoB has also introduced midwifery course and created 2,994 posts for the midwives.

60. The Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (the MoHFW), in collaboration with UNICEF, has undertaken Emergency Obstetric Care (EOC) Programme with a view to improving the maternal health care (MDG-5). Currently, all the government medical college hospitals, district hospitals, Upazila hospitals, and Maternal and Child Welfare Centres (MCWCs) provide obstetric care service. A number of private clinics or hospitals and health-related NGOs are also partners in this programme. There is a 93 percent increase in deliveries in the upgraded EOC facilities. In addition, 1,500 Union Health and Family Welfare Centres are upgraded to provide obstetrics first aid services.[47]

Measures to prevent HIV/Aids

61. HIV prevalence rate is very low in Bangladesh. The number of potential HIV patients is 11,700. New HIV infections among adults (15–49 years) remained less than 0.01 percent. This was possible for early initiatives such as, the HIV/AIDS Prevention Project (HAPP) 2004-2007 which was aimed at controlling the spread of HIV infection within

high-risk groups (i.e. children, sex workers, clients of sex service, and the transgender) as well the general population.[48]

Sanitation for girls

62. The National Baseline Hygiene Survey 2014 revealed that inadequacy of toilets and poor management of toilets at the educational institutions causes health problems of girls and the decreases their attendance. To address the problem, the MoE issued a circular on 23 June 2015, to implement certain measures for gender friendly sanitation in every school, such as, separate toilets for girls, suitable toilets for the disabled students, discussion about menstruation by female teachers among the girl students, providing sanitary napkin (if necessary, on payment) etc.[49]

F. Access to education

63. The GoB maintains that Education for All (EFA) is a fundamental condition for development.[50] Initiatives have been taken to extend compulsory primary education up to Class-VIII by 2018.[51]

Compulsory and free primary education

64. Under the Compulsory Primary Education Act, 1990, primary education is free in all government schools for all children between 6–10 years. Since 2011, the GoB has been seeking to ensure enrollment of all children within the catchment area of each government primary schools.

Enrolment and dropouts

65. According to BANBEIS Report 2016, the total number of students enrolled in primary schools was 18,602,988. The Gross Enrolment Rate in primary education increased to 112.2 percent in 2016 from 108.4 percent in 2005 and the Net Enrolment Rate has increased to 97.98 percent from 94.7 percent. In 2014, the average dropout rate in primary education was 0.75 percent in Class-I and 1.4 percent in Class-V [ANNEX-VIII].

Distribution of free textbooks

66. During 2013–2017, the GoB distributed more than 4.60 billion free textbooks among the students from Class-I to Class-IX [ANNEX-IX]. The GoB also provided books to the visually impaired students in 2017. In 2018 for the first time, 34,642 textbooks, 34,642 exercise books (pre-primary) and 79,992 books of Class-I were distributed among the children of 5 small ethnic groups (Chakma, Marma, Tripura, Garo and Sadri).

Protection against torture

Legislative Measures

67. The GoB has enacted the Torture and Custodial Death (Prevention) Act, 2013 with a view to giving effect to the provisions of the UN Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, 1984.[52] Under this Act, any person convicted of torture shall be punished with rigorous imprisonment for a term not less than five years and fine. Attempt to, abetment of and conspiracy to such crime are also punishable by imprisonment and fine. In the event of death caused by torture, punishment would be rigorous imprisonment for life and fine. No exceptional circumstances including a state of war or threat of war, internal political instability or any other public emergency may be invoked to justify an act of torture.[53]

Non-discrimination and rights of minorities

68. The GoB is deeply committed to protect and promote the rights of the religious and ethnic minorities in the country. The Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion and Belief in his 2015 report noted that "religious pluralism is deeply rooted in Bangladesh and the

principle of secularism as laid down in the Constitution provides for a framework which accommodates religious and belief-related pluralism for everyone without discrimination".[54]

The CHT Peace Accord

69. The Chittagong Hill Tracts Peace Accord is one of the most successful initiatives of the Prime Minister, Sheikh Hasina that has peacefully ended the decades-long conflict in the hill regions. The GoB is therefore fully committed to implement the Accord in its entirety. To accelerate the implementation of the remaining provisions of the Peace Accord, the GoB reconstituted the CHT Accord Implementation Committee in January 2018. In 2016, the GoB amended the Chittagong Hill Tracts Land Dispute Resolution Commission Act, 2016 to facilitate speedier resolution of land disputes and protection of land rights of the small ethnic communities of that region.[55]

Addressing violence against minorities

70. The GoB maintains 'zero tolerance' policy to any form of violence against religious minorities under any pretext. In order to promote religious diversity and inter-faith harmony, the GoB actively advocates the motto: "*Each unto his or her religion, Festivals are for All*". The LEAs provide security to the religious minority communities during religious festivals and other times.

71. Any incident of violence against religious minorities is addressed as promptly as possible. The GoB has unequivocally condemned all incidents of violence against religious and ethnic minorities and taken appropriate legal actions to bring the perpetrators to justice. For example, when violence against the minority community erupted in *Nasirnagar* of *Brahmanbaria* district, the GoB has instructed the local administration to take immediate actions to file cases and arrest the accused persons. A total of 08 cases have been filed over the incident and 124 persons were arrested.[56] [ANNEX-XVI]

Security for places of worship

72. The LEAs are under standing instruction to tender special security to places of worship especially during religious occassions. Desecrating places of worship, insulting religion, and disturbing religious assembly are punishable offences under the Penal Code, 1860. During 2013–2017, a number of 84 places of worship, temples or *poojamandaps* were reported to have been ransacked or desecrated. Criminal cases have been lodged in respect of all of the aforementioned incidents.[57]

Rights specific to women

73. The GoB considers empowerment of women as a precondition for national development, and empowerment of women can only be achieved by protecting the rights of women.[58]

Gender equality

74. Bangladesh ranks 47th among 144 nations according to the Global Gender Gap Report 2017 published by the World Economic Forum (WEF) which is a sharp rise from its position in 2015 and 2016 (64th and 72nd respectively). Bangladesh has topped among the South Asian countries in securing gender equality for the third consecutive year.[59]

Women's right to education, employment, healthcare and housing[60]

75. Enrollment ratio of girls in primary schools is 50.7 percent, in secondary level is 53.6 percent and in higher secondary level is 47.56 percent. The admission rate has increased to 99.64 percent at primary school level. A total of 3.96 million disadvantaged girl students have received stipend worth BDT 6601.5 million at different levels of their education. An amount of BDT 999.50 million has been distributed as stipends among 0.16

million female students at undergraduate level. The GoB has established 4 Polytechnic Institutes exclusively for female students.

76. In Bangladesh, about 33.5 percent women work in productive sector. From 1999 to 2013, there was almost 190 percent increase in women workforce in respect of 20–29 age-group while there was 100 percent increase in 30–39 and 40–49 age groups. Currently, the contribution of women workforce in our GDP growth is 34 percent. In the government service, 10 percent quota has been reserved for women against the gazetted posts and another 15 percent against the non-gazetted posts. In primary schools, the quota reserved for women against the post of teacher is 60 percent.

77. The GoB has introduced Maternal Health Voucher Scheme (a demand-side financing scheme) in 53 Upazilas for making available skilled care to 0.175 million poor pregnant women at home or facility. Since 2009, Community Clinics have provided primary health care, nutrition and family planning services to 32 million women and about 2.89 million pregnant women received emergency antenatal care through Upazila Health Complexes and 97 Women and Children Welfare Centres.

78. More than 50 percent of the homeless people rehabilitated under the Prime Minister's ASHRAYAN project are women. The GoB has plan to rehabilitate over 250,000 homeless people under this project by 2019 as part of its plan to bring all homeless people under safety net. In addition, the GoB has facilitated construction of houses for about 50,000 homeless people in the coastal areas.

Criminalizing violence against women

79. In addition to the Cruelty to Women and Children (Prevention) Act, 2000, the GoB has enacted the Domestic Violence (Prevention and Protection) Act, 2010, the Control of Pornography Act, 2012 and the DNA Act, 2014 with a view to safeguarding women from all forms of violence, cyber-crimes and pornography. A National Action Plan to Prevent Violence against Women and Children (2013–2025) has been formulated. The major areas of the Action Plan are – legal arrangement and legal facilities; socio economic advancement of women and children; protective services for violence against women and children; prevention and rehabilitation; institutional measures and strategies for implementing National Action Plan. Domestic Workers' Protection and Welfare Policy, 2015 has been adopted with a view to provide legal protection to the domestic workers against abuse, discrimination, irregular employment, low wages, and long work-hours. The Labour Act, 2006 provides that no woman employee will be subjected to indecent or objectionable behavior (s. 332).[51]

Measures to address violence against women[52]

80. In view of allegations of sexual harassment of women, the SC, in Writ Petition No. 5916/2008, issued directives to form 'Complaint Committees' at every government office, educational institution and other workplace to address allegations of sexual harassment in workplace. In addition, the SC has declared all extra judicial punishments, including those made in the name of '*Fatwa*' illegal.[53]

81. A 24-hour toll-free National Helpline '109' has been put in place to prevent violence against women, child marriage etc. During 2013–2017, a total of 1,703 medical assistance, 4,218 counseling, 12,160 police support, 31,854 legal assistance, 662,211 information were provided by the 109 service [ANNEX-X]. This helpline has been incorporated in textbooks from class VI-XI. In order to facilitate investigation in rape cases, a National Forensic DNA Profiling Laboratory has been established and in order to extend the service of the DNA Lab across the country, seven Divisional DNA Screening Laboratories have been established.[54] A mobile app "Joy" has been developed to provide quick support to the women and children victims of violence.

Prevention of early and forced marriage

82. The GoB recognizes child marriage as a retarding factor behind dropout of girls from schools, violence against women as well as non-empowerment of women. In order to eliminate child marriage by 2021, the GoB has enacted the Child Marriage Restraint Act,

2017 replacing the earlier law. The Act provides for formation of child marriage prevention committees at both national and locality levels and authorizes the public officials to prevent child marriage. The rates of child marriage before the age 15 and 18 were 10.7 percent and 47.0 percent respectively (BIDS Report 2017). During 2013–2017, a total of 7,997 child marriages were prevented, in particular, 1,035 child marriages were prevented by way of the National Helpline 109. A number of 584 cases were filed and 1,761 persons were convicted in connection with child marriage.[65] [ANNEX-XVI]

Access to health care, legal assistance, rehabilitation and counseling

83. To support the women & children victims of violence 9 One-Stop Crisis Centres have been established. In addition to that, 60 One-Stop Crisis Cells have been established at 40 district hospitals and 20 *Upazila* Health Complexes so as to provide temporary shelter to the victims. National Trauma Counseling Centre provides psychosocial counseling to the women and children victims of violence. Total 8 Safe Custodies and 6 Woman Support Centers provide women and children victims shelter for 6 months, legal assistance, psychosocial counseling and skill development training. The Police are also operating 8 Victim Support Centres with a view to assisting and rehabilitating the woman and girl victims of violence. Under the National Legal Aid Rules, 2014, a total of 74,085 women received legal aid services free of cost during 2013–2017. [ANNEX-VI].[66]

Prosecution of offenders for violence against women

84. The GoB has established 54 special tribunals for speedy disposal of cases of violence against women. During 2013–2017, a number of 7,343 cases were filed (One-Stop Crisis Centres /Cells record), 1,194 cases were disposed of with conviction in 140 cases.[67]

Implementing the Domestic Violence Act

85. In order to facilitate effective implementation of the Domestic Violence (Prevention and Protection) Act, 2010, the GoB has enacted the Domestic Violence (Prevention and Protection) Rules in 2013. During 2012–2016, a total number of 30,797 cases were filed under this Act.[68]

Empowerment of women[69]

86. In order to ensure participation of women in decision-making at the highest level, the Constitution provides for 50 reserved seats exclusively for women in Parliament. In addition, the current Parliament also has 20 female members elected through popular vote. Now, Bangladesh has the unique distinction of having women in the positions of the Prime Minister, the Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition and the Deputy Leader. There are 4 female members in the current Cabinet. The EC has set rules for the registered political parties to increase women's nomination up to 30 percent in elections by 2020 and ensure 33 percent women membership within their ranks.[70]

87. By the end of 2015, the total number of women employed in the government service (from class-I to class-IV rank) was 378,354. A total of 431 females are currently serving as mid-level and senior officials in the government services. There are 06 female Judges in the SC and 388 female judges in the subordinate judiciary. [ANNEX-XVI]

Rights specific to children

88. The GOB believes that empowerment of children through vindication of their rights in all spheres of life serves their best interest.[71] With this end in view, the GoB has enacted the Children Act, 2013 to give effect to the provisions of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1989 (the CRC),[72] repealing the earlier Children Act 1974. Among others, the said Act defines 'child' as a person below the age of 18 years.[73]

Child ombudsman and MACR

89. The GoB is actively considering the NHRCB's proposal for rising minimum age of criminal responsibility (MACR) from 9 to 12 years.[74] In addition, the NHRCB, after consultation with its partner organizations, stakeholders, NGOs and civil societies, has recommended for establishment of a Child Rights Commission with a greater mandate and also submitted a draft law- which is now being scrutinized by the GoB.[75]

Birth registration

90. The Birth Registration Act, 2004 was extensively amended in 2013. The said Act provides that the Registrar shall register the fact of birth of every child without distinction whatsoever as to religion, race, sex, colour etc within 45 days of its birth. In 2009, an online Birth Registration Information System (BRIS) was established. From 2013 to 2017, BRIS captured 102,218,779 birth records.[76] [ANNEX-XI]

Access to resources[77]

91. The GoB incorporated children's perspective in the national budget on an experimental basis for the first time ever in FY 2015–16 and allocated BDT 258.5 million among the relevant ministries for financing child specific development projects. [ANNEX-XVI]

Violence against children

92. The Children Act, 2013 provides for punishment for assault, neglect, desertion, abuse of a child, making a child work for one's personal purpose, exposing the child in an indecent exposure, causing injury or mental sufferings etc. In addition, exploitation of a child by a person legally entrusted with the care of a child has been made punishable offence.[78] The SC in Writ Petition No. 5684/2010 has issued a directive to stop all forms of corporal punishment at educational institutions. Accordingly, the GoB has issued a circular prohibiting all forms of corporal punishment at all educational institutions.[79]

93. The GoB has officially put in place the first 24-hour toll-free Child Helpline '1098' to provide a free telephone service to children facing violence, abuse and exploitation. Earlier, during the piloting stage, this helpline received 25,907 calls from October 2015 to May 2016 and stopped 152 child marriages.

94. During 2013–2017, a number of 1,205 children were reported to have been victims of violence such as murder, assault, abduction, pornography, trafficking etc. The number of pending cases of violence against children is 1,060. In addition, during 2013–2017, a total of 145 cases of child trafficking were disposed of convicting 36 accused persons [ANNEX-XII].[80] During 2013–2017, a total of 239 children received legal aid services [ANNEX-VI].

Rights specific to persons with disabilities

95. The GoB is committed to support the persons with disabilities in all aspects of their lives. Integrating the disabled persons into the mainstream national development agenda is a priority of the government. Hence, the GoB has included the issue of development of the disabled persons in its Seventh Five-Year Plan.

Legislative measures

96. The Rights and Protection of the Persons with Disabilities Act, 2013 ('the Disabilities Act') was enacted to give effect to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, 2006.[81] The Disabilities Act incorporates a broad mandate to ensure protection of the disabled persons. The Act provides for, among others, registration of persons with legally recognized disabilities, reservation of seats for the disabled persons in the public transport, protection against discrimination as regards admission to educational institutions, access of the disabled persons to public places, and prohibition of any kind of discrimination on grounds of disability by any authority or institution.[82] The Act also penalizes acts/actions causing impediment to enjoyment of those rights.[83]

97. The first-ever nationwide door-to-door survey to identify and register all the persons with disabilities was conducted under 'The Disability Detection Survey Programme' initiated by GoB in 2012. Till now, about 1.534 million persons with disabilities have come under registration process.

Access to resources

98. The persons with disabilities are eligible to receive special allowance, which has been increased from BDT 300 to BDT 700 per month. In FY 2017–2018, the GoB has allocated BDT 6,930 million to pay monthly allowances to 825,000 disable persons.[84]

Education for the persons with disabilities

99. The Disabilities Act prohibits educational institutions from refusing to grant admission to any person on the ground of disability. It also provides for special quota for admission of the disabled students to educational institutions.

100. The GoB has introduced Integrated Education Programme for visually impaired students in 64 districts, 1 National Training and Rehabilitation Centre for visually impaired learners, 5 schools for visually impaired students, 1 institution for the children with mental disorder, 8 schools for students suffering from hearing and speech impairments, 1 Centre for employment and rehabilitation of physically disabled persons, 1 rural rehabilitation centres and 6 training and rehabilitation centres for orphan and disabled persons [ANNEX-XIII].[85]

101. In order to prevent dropouts, the GoB has introduced stipend programme for the disabled children. In 2017–2018, the GoB has sanctioned BDT 540.48 million for students with disabilities.

Healthcare

102. A number of 80,000 students with disabilities have been receiving fast-track access to free healthcare service at all government hospitals. These students can also avail therapeutic services at 103 Integrated Disabilities Services Centre (IDSC) and 32 Mobile Therapy Vans free of cost. To date, a number of 296,738 persons with disabilities have availed of services at the IDSCs and 238,253 persons with disabilities have availed of services at Mobile Therapy Vans. The GoB also provided assistive devices to 20,229 disabled persons since 2013.[86]

Access to public services and electoral process

103. The GoB has reserved 10 percent quota for the disabled persons against class-III and class-IV category posts and 1 percent quota against class-I category posts in government services.[87]

104. The Representation of the People Order, 1972 provides for special measures to enable persons with disabilities to exercise their voting right in elections. Under the Electoral Roll Rules, 2012 registration team is required to register a disabled person as a voter in his/her place of residence.[88]

Rights specific to migrant workers

105. The GoB has enacted Overseas Employment and Migrant Act, 2013 to safeguard the rights and privileges of migrant workers. The Act provides for compulsory employment contract for the migrant workers, mandatory stipulation of terms and conditions relating to salary, accommodation, contract period and compensation for workplace injury or death. The Ministry of Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment (the MoEWOE) has so far signed 14 MoUs / Bilateral Labour Agreements with the major migrant workers receiving countries. However, non-participation of the receiving countries in the ICRMW remains the main challenge to ensuring the wellbeing of the migrant workers in the destination country.

Cost of migration

106. The GoB has set reduction of the migration cost as one of its top priorities following the SDGs commitment (target 10.7). In order to prevent exploitation by intermediaries, the MoEWOE has fixed the migration cost for 16 receiving countries, namely, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Oman, Qatar, Kuwait, Singapore, the United Arab Emirates, Iraq, Lebanon, Egypt, Jordan, Russia, Malaysia, Libya, Bahrain, Maldives and Brunei. Besides this, zero recruitment cost has been set for female migrant workers who intend to work in Saudi Arabia and Jordan.[89]

107. The GoB has set up 29 Labour Welfare Wings at 26 Bangladesh missions abroad to address the interests of migrant workers. 4 safe homes have been established in Jeddah, Riyadh, Medina and Muscat for vulnerable female workers. Moreover, legal assistance is being provided to the vulnerable workers by the Labour Welfare Wings.

108. Till November 2017, a total of 742,516 workers have received training at 70 technical training centres. Out of them, a number of 713,628 workers have been employed abroad. Besides, 27 new technical training centres and 5 institutes of marine technology have been set up.[90]

Thematic issues

A. Labour standards

109. The GoB, in order to better implement the international labour standards, amended the Labor Act, 2006 in 2013 providing for flexible procedure for trade union registration and occupational health and safety measures. The Labour Rules, 2015 was framed with a view to supplementing the Labour Act, 2006. In January 2018, a Wage Board has been formed for determining the minimum wages for workers in the garments sector within 6 months.[91]

Labour inspection

110. The GoB has upgraded the Directorate of Labour to a Department (the DoL) and increased its manpower from 712 to 921. The Directorate of Inspection for Factories and Establishments has also been upgraded to a Department (the DIFE) and its manpower has been increased from 314 to 993. During 2016–2017, the total number of 32,994 factories was inspected and 1,273 factories were penalized for violating law.[92]

Occupational health and safety

111. Following Tazreen Fashion and Rana Plaza incidents, a National Tripartite Plan of Action was adopted to assess the structural, fire and electrical safety standards in the garment factories. Under the national initiative as well as with cooperation from 'Accord on Fire and Building Safety' and 'Alliance for Bangladesh Safety', a total of 3,780 garment factories have been inspected.

112. Under the National Occupational Health and Safety Policy, 2013 an OSH Unit comprising 16 members has been formed to oversee occupational health and safety issues in factories and establishments. A total of 976 safety committees have been formed under the supervision of the DIFE to ensure to occupational health and safety. Meanwhile, the DIFE established a Remediation Coordination Cell (RCC) in 2017 to facilitate remediation of factories, which were unable to fully comply with health and safety regulations. A number of 1,549 factories will be brought under remediation process at first.[93]

Welfare of female workers

113. The MoLE has established a total of 4,264 Day-Care centres in various factories and establishments to help the female workers. The labour law provides for inclusion of 10 percent female members in the executive committees of those factories or establishments where at least 20 percent of the workers are female.[94]

Freedom of association

114. The Labour Act, 2006 was amended to ease the registration process of trade unions, particularly in the RMG sector. At present 8,015 registered trade unions and 202 trade union federations are functioning. In the RMG sector 500 new trade unions have been registered after amendment bringing the total number to 652.[95] [ANNEX-XIV].

115. The Gob has introduced online registration system for the trade unions. During 2016–2017, a total of 189 online applications were received from which 140 were successful.

116. During 2013–2017, out of 112 complaints about unfair labour practices, 64 complaints were resolved amicably, criminal cases were filed against 39, and the remaining 09 complaints were under investigation.

Child labour

117. The GoB has pledged to eliminate child labour by 2025. RMG and Shrimp sectors are free from child labour. Child labour has been prohibited in 38 hazardous jobs and about 100,000 children have been removed from hazardous jobs and rehabilitated. A new project has been taken to rehabilitate another 60,000 children from hazardous jobs. Total 145 cases have been filed so far against different factories and establishments for child labour.[96]

B. Human trafficking

118. To deal with human trafficking and related transnational crimes, the GoB is implementing a National Plan of Action (the NPA: 2015-2017) with five objectives, namely, Prevention of Human trafficking, Protection of the Survivors, Promoting Legal Justice, Developing Partnership, and Effective Monitoring.[97]

Measures to combat human trafficking

119. In order to complement the Prevention and Suppression of Human Trafficking Act, 2012, the GoB framed the Prevention and Suppression of Human Trafficking Rule, 2017, the Human Trafficking Suppression Authority Rule, 2017 and the Human Trafficking Fund Rule, 2017.[98] At the implementation level, monitoring cells have been established in Police Headquarter as well as in 64 districts. A case monitoring committee has been established in the Public Security Division to expedite disposal of human trafficking cases. The GoB has also set up Counter Trafficking Committee (CTC) in every district with representatives from government, NGOs, and civil society.

120. During 2013–2017, a total of 7,520 persons were victims of trafficking, 6,045 victims were rescued, total 3,487 cases were filed against 14,500 accused persons and 5,700 were arrested [ANNEX-XV].[99] Bangladesh Coast Guard has conducted 36,563 operations and has inspected more than 178,234 vessels. The Border Guard of Bangladesh (BGB) has established border outposts in *Cox's Bazar* district to prevent human trafficking by sea route.

Support for the victims of human trafficking

121. The GoB has taken steps to rehabilitate victims of trafficking in collaboration with UNICEF. A total of 3,443 female victims received counseling to achieve mental stability at the One Stop Crisis Centres/Cells.[100]

Public awareness about human trafficking

122. Under the NPA: 2015-2017, the GoB has organized a number of awareness programmes on trafficking. 2 national conferences and 5 divisional conferences have been held to encourage the activities of CTCs. CTCs have arranged court-yard meetings, movie shows, bazar meetings, documentary screenings, leaflet distribution, poster and booklet circulation, adolescents and youth clubs to create awareness on human trafficking. More than 2,200 books have been distributed among the different stakeholders on anti-trafficking messaging. Bangladesh Betar telecasts talk show on human trafficking every month.[101] A

mobile app titled 'Bidesh Jai' has been developed to alert young prospective migrants about the risks of irregular migration.

C. Socially marginalized and vulnerable groups[102]

123. In order to empower the underprivileged sections of society (*Dalits, Harijans, Bede*, Tea Plantation Workers, Transgenders etc.) and put an end to all sorts of discrimination against them, the Law Commission has prepared the Anti-discrimination Bill, 2014, which is now under active consideration of the government.[103]

124. In 2014, the GoB officially recognized the gender identity of the transgender persons distinctively. In view of this development, the EC is taking steps to register the transgender persons by their own gender identity in the electoral roll.[104]

D. Refugees and asylum seeker[105]

125. Bangladesh is not a signatory to the 1951 Refugee Convention, yet Bangladesh has long been hosting refugees and forcibly displaced Rohingyas from Myanmar with full respect to international protection regime. Recently, Bangladesh has opened its border for over a million who fled 'ethnic cleansing' in Myanmar. Since 25 August 2017, nearly 700,000 forcibly displaced Myanmar nationals crossed the border and took shelter in Bangladesh. In addition to this, nearly 300,000 Undocumented Myanmar Nationals have been living in Bangladesh for three decades.

126. The GoB has allocated 4,707 acres of land including forest areas to build the shelters for the Rohingyas. The GoB is also providing them with food, medical and WASH facilities, and other basic services. To ensure smooth distribution of relief and to maintain security of the Rohingyas, 11 additional police check posts has been established, more than 1,200 law enforcement officials & 1,700 military personnel have been deployed in Cox'sbazar. The GoB is also building roads and other infrastructures in Cox's Bazar district to facilitate timely delivery of humanitarian assistance to the Rohingyas. The GoB is conducting biometric registration of all displaced Rohingyas living in Bangladesh and also plans to issue documentation to the Rohingya children born in Bangladesh. The GoB is providing full access to all international partners and agencies including UN, INGOs, humanitarian actors, media and other civil society organizations to work in Cox's Bazar and support the Rohingyas.

127. The GoB remains sensitized about the rights of the Rohingyas; primarily the right to safe, dignified, voluntary return to their homes in Myanmar and to that end, concluded bilateral arrangements of return with Myanmar. Being mindful of the conditions that are critical for safe return, Bangladesh has negotiated to include *voluntariness, non-criminalization, livelihood, resettlement, reintegration* and other universal elements of human rights in the bilateral return arrangements and involved the relevant UN Agencies, particularly the UNHCR in the return process.

128. The GoB has remained constructively engaged with the UN, and other human rights & international non-government entities towards creating conducive environment in Myanmar. The GoB has initiated the adoption of the Resolution on the Human Rights Situation in Myanmar in the 72nd UN General Assembly. The GoB also initiated convening of the 27th Special Session of the Human Rights Council on Human Rights Situation of the Rohingya Muslims and other Minorities in the Rakhine State of Myanmar on 05 December 2017 that resulted into the adoption of a Resolution on Situation of Human Rights of Rohingya Muslims and other Minorities in Myanmar.

E. Other ISSUES

Environment and climate change[106]

129. The GoB has taken a 'Zero Discharge' policy to reduce pollution of river and water reservoir caused by leather Industries and shifted the tanneries from the residential area of Dhaka to industrial area. In its bid to reduce health hazard, the Environment Conservation Act, 1995 has made it compulsory to take necessary measures to curb pollution originating

from industrial process. In FY 2015–2016, a number of 1,151 Effluent Treatment Plants (ETP) has been set up and another 181 ETPs were in progress in the industrial sector.[107]

130. As one of the most vulnerable countries in terms of climate change the GoB remains committed to fulfilling its obligations under Paris Climate Accord 2015. The GoB is the lead sponsor of the annual resolution on Human Rights and Climate Change, and Protection of Family in the Human Rights Council. The GoB also promotes the concept of climate justice in all international discourses on climate change. At the domestic level, the GoB has adopted the Bangladesh Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan, 2009 that stipulates the immediate, short, medium, and long-term programmes. A number of projects are running to meet climate change challenges in Bangladesh. [ANNEX-XVI]

Human rights education[108]

131. The NHRCB provides training and education on human rights to law enforcement agencies. In this regard, the NHRCB has developed a Training Manual. The Police Staff College has incorporated human rights courses in their training curriculum for junior and senior police officers as well as for Corrections officers, Fire Service and Civil Defense officers, and DNC officers, among others.

132. The Directorate of Mass Communication regularly conducts programmes and campaigns among mass people to raise awareness about terrorism, child marriage, eve-teasing, drug abuse, corruption, sanitation, human trafficking etc. During 2009-2016, the Directorate of Mass Communication conducted a number of 67,686 film exhibitions, 16,964 concerts, 9,584 community meetings, 104 child fairs and 45,630 street performances to raise public awareness.

133. The GoB has launched a toll-free Emergency Helpline '999' for urgent assistance in the second week of December 2017. Till the end of January of 2018, a number of 450,000 calls have been received and service has been provided in response to 12,000 calls. The rest of the calls had been for information.

International cooperation[109]

134. The GoB believes in partnership and cooperation for improvement of human rights and its practices within and beyond its national boundary. UN and other multilateral organizations working in the field of human rights remains the most trusted partner of Bangladesh in the implementation of its human rights commitments. The GoB promotes exchange of experience and ideas for protection of human rights with its bilateral partners in the framework of regular dialogues and consultations. The GoB has also been partnering with its development partners for implementation of Sustainable Development Goals, particularly those relating to human rights, equality, access to justice and rule of law. Education and training in human rights feature in many bilateral cooperation arrangements between Bangladesh and its partner countries.

V. Future pledges

135. In pursuance to its commitment to the UPR process, Bangladesh will:

- Continue to host the forcibly displaced Myanmar nationals until they voluntarily return to their homeland in safety, security and dignity;
- Continue to enact national legislations to implement the international human rights instruments to which it is a party;
- Further strengthen national institutions that promote human rights, democracy, good governance and the rule of law;
- Continue to fully involve NGOs, CSOs and private sector in promoting human rights at all levels;
- Continue its pro-people development agenda with particular focus to women, children, persons with disabilities and other vulnerable sections of the society;

- Continue to promote humanitarian diplomacy and participate in global discourses on climate change, migration and displacement;
- Continue to promote a "culture of peace" and support collective measures against racism, xenophobia, islamophobia and protect the victims against such crimes;
- Continue to engage with the UN and other human rights mechanisms of the UN as well as international partners for improvement of human rights in Bangladesh as well as promotion of human rights everywhere.

Notes

[1] Recommendation No. 129.39 (Sierra Leone).
[2] Recommendation No. 129.47 (Uzbekistan).
[3] Recommendation Nos. 129.29 (Somalia).
[4] Recommendation No. 129.45 (Djibouti).
[5] Recommendation No. 129.50 (Portugal).
[6] Recommendation Nos. 129.48 (Sierra Leone), 129.48 (Peru), 129.48 (Turkmenistan), 129.49 (Slovenia), 129.49 (Ukraine), 129.49 (Zimbabwe), 129.50 (Republic of Korea).
[7] Recommendation Nos. 129.51 (State of Palestine).
[8] Recommendation Nos. 129.1 (Slovakia), 129.1 (Maldives), 129.2 (Peru), 129.2 (Argentina), 129.3 (Sierra Leone), 130.1 (Portugal), 130.2 (Maldives, Germany, Chile, Czech Republic, Costa Rica & Sweden), 130.3 (Hungary & Tunisia), 130.4 (Uruguay), 130.5 (Mexico), 130.6 (Denmark), 130.7 (Austria).
[9] Recommendation Nos. 130.8 (Finland, Austria & Denmark), 130.9 (Sweden & Germany), 130.14 (Australia).
[10] Recommendation Nos. 129.30 (Jordan), 129. 32 (Sudan).
[11] Recommendation No. 129.32 (Sudan).
[12] Recommendation No. 129.26 (South Africa).
[13] Recommendation No. 129.25 (Botswana).
[14] Recommendation No. 129.159 (Turkey).
[15] Recommendation No. 129.27 (Ecuador).
[16] Recommendation No. 129.34 (Azerbaijan).
[17] Recommendation Nos. 129.4 (Nicaragua), 129.5 (Maldives).
[18] Recommendation No. 129.78 (Vietnam).
[19] Recommendation Nos. 130.11 (Tunisia), 130.11 (Latvia).
[20] Recommendation No. 129.74 (Spain).
[21] Recommendation Nos. 129.73 (France), 129.74 (Czech Republic).
[22] Recommendation No. 129.67 (Egypt).
[23] Recommendation No. 129.15 (Sri Lanka).
[24] Recommendation Nos. 129.33 (Indonesia), 129.68 (Netherlands), 129.75 (UK), 129.76 (USA), 129.79 (Cyprus), 129.80 (Switzerland), 129.81 (Singapore), 129.83 (Germany), 129.84 (Sweden).
[25] Recommendation No. 129.14 (Chad).
[26] Recommendation No. 129.102 (Russian Federation).
[27] Recommendation Nos. 129.72 (Norway), 129.77 (Austria).
[28] Recommendation Nos. 129.101 (Norway), 129.103 (Canada).
[29] Recommendation No. 129.104 (Norway).
[30] Recommendation No. 129.35 (South Africa).
[31] Recommendation Nos. 129.115 (China), 129.119 (Malaysia), 129.160 (Bhutan), 129.162 (Saudi Arabia), 129.163 (Lebanon).
[32] Recommendation Nos. 129. 35 (South Africa), 129.36 (Zimbabwe).
[33] Recommendation Nos. 129.118 (Nigeria), 129.121 (Bhutan), 129.122 (Saudi Arabia), 129.123 (Iraq), 129.126 (Cambodia), 129.161 (Nepal).
[34] Recommendation Nos. 129.96 (Egypt), 129.97 (Russian Federation).
[35] Recommendation No. 129.97 (Russian Federation).
[36] Recommendation Nos. 129.116 (United Arab Emirates), 129.120 (Iran), 129.125 (Venezuela).
[37] Recommendation No. 129.127 (Holy See).
[38] Recommendation No. 129.129 (Egypt).

[39] Recommendation No. 129.124 (Venezuela).
[40] Recommendation No. 129.130 (South Africa).
[41] Recommendation No. 129.97 (Russian Federation).
[42] Recommendation No. 129.128 (Sierra Leone).
[43] Recommendation Nos. 129.138 (Cuba), 129.139 (Pakistan), 129.140 (Uzbekistan), 129.141 (China).
[44] Recommendation Nos. 129.133 (Brunei Darussalam), 129.134 (Ireland), 129.136 (Afghanistan & Cuba), 129.137 (Bahrain).
[45] Recommendation Nos. 129.133 (Brunei Darussalam), 129.136 (Somalia & Cuba).
[46] Recommendation No. 129.135 (Holy See).
[47] Recommendation No. 129.135 (Holy See).
[48] Recommendation No. 129.131 (Thailand).
[49] Recommendation No. 129.143 (Algeria).
[50] Recommendation Nos. 129.138 (Cuba), 129.139 (Pakistan), 129.140 (Uzbekistan), 129.141 (China).
[51] Recommendation No. 129.142 (Italy).
[52] Recommendation No. 129.5 (Maldives).
[53] Recommendation Nos. 129.68 (Netherlands), 129.82 (Czech Republic), 129.85 (Costa Rica).
[54] Recommendation Nos. 129.151 (Djibouti), 129.152 (Nicaragua), 130.22 (Switzerland).
[55] Recommendation No. 129.153 (Australia & Ecuador).
[56] Recommendation Nos. 129.93 (Austria), 129.98 (Slovakia), 129.100 (Japan).
[57] Recommendation No. 129.99 (Canada).
[58] Recommendation Nos. 129.63 (Djibouti), 129.64 (Morocco), 129.65 (Afghanistan).
[59] Recommendation Nos. 129.56 (Guatemala), 129.58 (Rwanda).
[60] Recommendation Nos. 129.7 (Qatar), 129.57 (Côte d'Ivoire).
[61] Recommendation Nos. 129.8 (Moldova), 129.10 (Uruguay), 129.70 (Finland), 129.86 (Uruguay).
[62] Recommendation Nos. 129.69 (Republic of Korea), 129.88 (Senegal).
[63] Recommendation No. 129.62 (Côte d'Ivoire).
[64] Recommendation No. 129.87 (Japan).
[65] Recommendation Nos. 129.90 (Canada), 129.31 (Switzerland).
[66] Recommendation Nos. 129.9 (France), 129.10 (Uruguay), 129.11 (Indonesia).
[67] Recommendation Nos. 129.8 (Moldova), 129.10 (Uruguay), 129.92 (Pakistan).
[68] Recommendation Nos. 129.38 (Brazil), 129.70 (Finland), 129.89 (Spain), 129.91 (Netherlands).
[69] Recommendation Nos. 129.41 (Cambodia), 129.59 (Russian Federation), 129.60 (Nepal), 129.61 (Sudan), 129.66 (Bolivia) (Romania), (State of Palestine).
[70] Recommendation Nos. 129.106 (Algeria), 129.105 (Nicaragua).
[71] Recommendation Nos. 129.41 (Cambodia), 129.63 (Djibouti), 129.64 (Morocco), 129.60 (Nepal).
[72] Recommendation Nos. 129.4 (Nicaragua), 129.64 (Morocco), 129.65 (Afghanistan).
[73] Recommendation No. 129.40 (Jordan).
[74] Recommendation No. 129.94 (Austria).
[75] Recommendation No. 129.28 (Algeria).
[76] Recommendation No. 129.95 (Uruguay).
[77] Recommendation No. 129.117 (Vietnam).
[78] Recommendation Nos. 129.71 (Pakistan), 129.88 (Senegal).
[79] Recommendation No. 130.19 (Portugal).
[80] Recommendation Nos. 129.88 (Senegal), 129.18 (Kyrgyzstan), 129.19 (Moldova).
[81] Recommendation Nos. 129.5 (Maldives), 129.6 (Tunisia), 129.22 (Mexico), 129.145 (Brazil), 129.148 (Kyrgyzstan).
[82] Recommendation No. 129.64 (Morocco).
[83] Recommendation Nos. 129.23 (Slovakia), 129.64 (Morocco).
[84] Recommendation Nos. 129.117 (Vietnam), 129.149 (Senegal).
[85] Recommendation No. 129.146 (Iran).
[86] Recommendation No. 129.147 (Oman).
[87] Recommendation Nos. 129.6 (Tunisia), 129.23 (Slovakia).
[88] Recommendation No. 129.150 (Venezuela).
[89] Recommendation No. 129.154 (Philippines).
[90] Recommendation No. 129.154 (Philippines).
[91] Recommendation No. 130.21 (Mauritania).
[92] Recommendation Nos. 129.108 (Mexico), 129.110 (Ireland).
[93] Recommendation Nos. 129.21 (Germany), 129.107 (Turkey), 129.111 (Yemen), 129.112 (Italy), 129.113 (USA), 129.114 (Sri Lanka).

[94] Recommendation No. 129.107 (Turkey).
[95] Recommendation Nos. 129.109 (France), 129.112 (Italy), 129.21 (Germany).
[96] Recommendation No. 129.108 (Mexico).
[97] Recommendation No. 129.12 (Azerbaijan).
[98] Recommendation No. 129.12 (Azerbaijan).
[99] Recommendation Nos. 129.13 (Nigeria), 129.14 (Chad), 129.16 (Bahrain), 129.17 (Afghanistan), 129.52 (Belarus).
[100] Recommendation Nos. 129.20 (Singapore), 129.37 (Venezuela).
[101] Recommendation Nos. 129.16 (Bahrain), 129.17 (Afghanistan).
[102] Recommendation No. 129.61 (Sudan).
[103] Recommendation Nos. 129.24 (Ecuador), 129.61 (Sudan), 129.60 (Nepal), 130.15 (Slovenia), 130.23 (Holy See).
[104] Recommendation No. 129.41 (Cambodia).
[105] Recommendation Nos. 129.155 (France), 129.156 (Spain), 129.157 (Canada), 129.158 (Argentina).
[106] Recommendation No. 129.164 (Bolivia).
[107] Recommendation No. 129.132 (Iran).
[108] Recommendation Nos. 129.42 (Morocco), 129.43 (Lebanon), 129.44 (Peru), 129.46 (Malaysia), 129.54 (Somalia), 129.144 (Thailand).
[109] Recommendation Nos. 129.53 (Turkmenistan), 129.55 (Turkmenistan).